



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2004-91

Thursday, June 17, 2004

CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer
(608) 266-3559 / joseph.donovan@dpi.state.wi.us

Alliance addresses daily attendance

MADISON—Addressing daily attendance head on, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster introduced a broad-based task force that is working to understand school attendance issues and plan an Aug. 25 summit to focus community solutions on the problem of truancy in Milwaukee.

Joined at today's press conference by Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, Milwaukee Common Council President Willie Hines, Milwaukee Public Schools Pupil Services Director Ada Rivera, Milwaukee School Board President Peter Blewett, and other community leaders, Burmaster outlined statutory requirements for convening a truancy committee, and spoke of the shared commitment needed to address the issue. The "Alliance for Attendance" will collaborate on uniting the community to improve school attendance in Milwaukee. The summit will include students and parents; members of the faith community; business and community leaders; school representatives; the District Attorney, police department, and circuit and juvenile courts; social services representatives; and other stakeholders in developing strategies to reduce truancy.

"I listened to more than 200 students in schools across Milwaukee to hear what they think can be done about lifting attendance in MPS," Burmaster said. "At each of the 11 roundtable sessions, students were inspirational about how they overcame very difficult conditions in their homes and neighborhoods to be successful in school. Some told me they would be the first in their families to graduate. Others spoke of concern for their future and the futures of their friends and families. Still others told us they skipped because they didn't feel safe going to, or being at school. These are issues we must address."

Milwaukee has about 11 percent of the state's student enrollment, but accounts for more than 50 percent of the state's truancy rate. School attendance in Milwaukee tends to decline as children progress through school with an elementary school attendance rate of 93.1 percent; middle school,

(more)

87.4 percent; and by high school, average school attendance of 79.5 percent. Habitual truancy makes it more likely that students drop out, further distancing young people from lifetime educational, career, and community success.

The Aug. 25 truancy summit will develop specific strategies and recommend community resources to combat truancy, including efforts to

- create expectations in the school and community that students will be in school and are missed when absent,
- create environments that help students feel successful, no matter how small the steps,
- make school a place where students feel safe and respected,
- make students feel welcome in school, and
- reduce temptations for students to become truant.

“No one group can solve the problem of truancy. We must join together to make our schools welcoming to all students and our communities safe for our children to grow. There is no better cause than joining together to improve the lives and futures of our children,” Burmaster said.

###

ATTACHMENT: A list of members of the “Alliance for Attendance: Working Together to Keep our Children in School” follows.

Alliance for Attendance

Working Together to Keep our Children in School

Roberta "Bobbi" Aguero
Small School Development
Technical Assistance and
Leadership Center
Christian Albouras, Student
South Division High School
Christine Anderson
Executive Director
Milwaukee Partnership Academy
Bill Andrekopoulos
Superintendent
Milwaukee Public Schools
Mayor Tom Barrett
City of Milwaukee
Renee Beaudot
Youth Services Coordinator
United Migrant Opportunity
Services (UMOS)
Brenda Bell-White
Regional Director
Department of Workforce
Development
Antrell Bender, Student
Bradley Tech and Trade High School
Peter Blewett, President
Milwaukee Board of
School Directors
Alderman Jim Bohl
Milwaukee Common Council
Albert Brown
Acting Coordinator
Milwaukee Public Schools
Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction
Ramon Candelari
Latino Community Center
David Clarke Jr.
Milwaukee County Sheriff
Sen. Spencer Coggs
D-Milwaukee
Nancy Conner, Principal
Washington High School
Linda Davis
Donor's Forum
Sue Edman, Captain
Sensitive Crime Division
Milwaukee Police Department
Gloria Erkins, Principal
Vincent High School
Howard Fuller
Alliance for Choices in Education
Hughes George
Acting P-5 Coordinator
Milwaukee Public Schools

Mary Gissel
Milwaukee Public Schools
Alderman Ashanti Hamilton
Milwaukee Common Council
Jerry Ann Hamilton, President
Milwaukee Branch of the NAACP
Ray Harmon, Director
Governor's Milwaukee Office
Janie Hatton, Principal
North Division High School
Police Chief Nan Hegerty
City of Milwaukee
Valerie Hill, Municipal Court Judge
City of Milwaukee
Alderman Willie Hines, President
Milwaukee Common Council
Ralph Hollmon, President and CEO
Milwaukee Urban League
Rev. Archie L. Ivy
Director, MICAH
New Hope Missionary
Baptist Church
Ken Johnson, Acting President
YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee
Bruce Kamradt, Executive Director
Wraparound Milwaukee
Willie Little Jr.
Milwaukee
Joyce Mallory, Program Director
Wisconsin Council on Children
and Families
Dester Martin, Director
African American Chamber
of Commerce
Mondell Mayfield, Principal
Douglas Community Academy
President, Metropolitan
Milwaukee Association of
Black School Educators
Mike McCann, District Attorney
Milwaukee County
Alderman Mike McGee Jr.
Milwaukee Common Council
Norm McLure, Social Worker
Pierce Elementary School
Maria Monreal Cameron, Director
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
of Wisconsin
Reginald Moore
Urban Underground
Dana Nix, Director
Truancy Abatement and Burglary
Suppression (TABS)

Barbara Parisi
Coordinator of School Social Work
Milwaukee Public Schools
Jacquelyn Patterson, Principal
Congress Elementary School
Joan Prince, Vice Chancellor
Partnerships and Innovations
UW-Milwaukee
Chris Protz
Vice President of Operations
Boys and Girls Club of
Greater Milwaukee
Gerard A. Randall Jr., Director
Private Industry Council
of Milwaukee
Sister Joel Read, Chair
Education Committee
Greater Milwaukee Committee
Denise Revels-Robinson, Director
Bureau of Milwaukee
Child Welfare
Steve Robertson, Youth Pastor
Christian Faith Fellowship Church
Robin Rosche
Assistant District Attorney
Milwaukee County
Paul Schmitz
Public Allies Inc.
Tim Sheehy, President
Metropolitan Milwaukee
Association of Commerce
Betty Smith, Executive Director
Milwaukee Catalyst
Roxanne Starks
Wisconsin Congress of Parents
and Teachers (PTA)
Michael Sullivan, Chief Judge
Milwaukee County Circuit Court
Rep. Barbara Toles
D-Milwaukee
Alderman Willie Wade
Milwaukee Common Council
Joe Wall, Children's Court Judge
Milwaukee County Circuit Court
Rev. Rolen Womack
Progressive Baptist Church
Patricia Yahle, Director
Special Services
Milwaukee Public Schools
Dashal Young
Community Relations Director
County Executive's Office